MEDIA RELEASE

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A3P meets with Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Panel

A3P, the industry council representing the plantation products and paper industry, has today met with the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review Panel appointed by the Australian Government to discuss A3P's recent submission to the panel.

Representing Australia's plantation products and paper industry, A3P CEO Mr Neil Fisher said "A3P has a substantial interest in quarantine and biosecurity issues from a number of different perspectives.

"A3P is concerned that, with respect to forest pests, the Australian quarantine arrangements are too focused on imported commodities (primarily sawn timber) and not sufficiently focused on packing materials (often made of low grade wood) and cargo containers which are likely to represent a much higher risk.

"A3P acknowledges the progress which has been made in the implementation of *International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures No. 15: Guidelines for regulating wood packaging material in international trade* (ISPM 15). However, A3P remains concerned that packaging timber originating in other countries and moving throughout the world represents a significant risk to Australia's plantation estate.

"A3P believes there is some concern that, partly as a result of the large number of organisations with an interest in pest trapping surveillance work (e.g. AQIS, Biosecurity Australia, DAFF, State agencies etc), there has not been sufficient information made available to relevant industries such as research, developments or findings concerning intercepted pest and diseases, new trapping methodologies, location of trapping systems etc.

"A3P is concerned that the distinction between "border" and "post-border" and the division or responsibilities between AQIS and State Governments may be resulting in a suboptimal outcomes with respect to this monitoring.

"However, A3P also believes that there are generic concerns with Biosecurity Australia and AQIS operations which include tardiness in making decisions, lack of scientific justification for some decisions, inefficiency in inspection and export clearance processes, lack of understanding of exports and importers operations and potential inconsistency between quarantine restrictions that are applied between Australian states and those which are applied to trade between Australia and other countries."

In response to questioning from the review panel on generic concerns with AQIS and Biosecurity Australia operations and how to address these issues the A3P CEO recommended the Review Panel reconsider a recommendation from the 1996 Nairn Review of Quarantine that a new statutory organisation be formed by merging AQIS and BA into a new entity.

For more information on A3P Quarantine and Biosecurity Review submission please visit http://www.a3p.asn.au/news/A3P%20Quarantine%20and%20Biosecurity%20Review%20Submission.pdf

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Further information

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